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CREATING A NEW SCANDAL IS THE LATEST EPISODE OF TRUMP'S ENDLESS COVER-UP

There's a lot we still don't know about President Donald Trump and Russia. We don't know the results of the counterintelligence investigation, whose findings are still secret, even from Congress. We don't know why special counsel Robert Mueller didn't significantly investigate Trump's finances beyond the Trump Tower Moscow project. And we don't know if Russia surreptitiously funneled money into Trump's 2016 campaign, as it has for Kremlin-aligned politicians throughout Europe.

We don't know these things because the Trump administration has obstructed justice, Congress, and everything in between to keep that information hidden.

The administration's latest obstructive push is more brazen than ever: actively politicizing U.S. intelligence and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to concoct an attack against President Barack Obama, while relying on those same mechanisms to conceal incriminating evidence about Trump himself.

Trump is inventing a conspiracy out of deceptive half-releases of information designed to mislead and distract from the real scandals he's hidden from view. Here's the playbook from Trump and his attack dogs Attorney General Bill Barr and Acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell:

Barr released the scoping memo for the Mueller investigation to help his case for freeing Flynn.

- On May 6, 2020, the Trump administration released the August 2017 memo from then-Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein that outlines the scope of special counsel Mueller's investigation, which Trump's cronies have long claimed would show he was the victim of a witch hunt.

But Barr failed to release the full Mueller report.

- The administration has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to temporarily block a lower court's order requiring the DOJ to provide evidence from the Mueller investigation to Congress.
- Barr refused to take even routine, basic steps to give Congress access to redacted material,

citing "secret grand-jury proceedings."

- Barr has continued executing this plan, even after a judge ruled in March that Barr's handling of the Mueller report was so clearly intended to help Trump politically that the attorney general couldn't be trusted to impartially handle the redaction process. The judge required Barr to turn over the full report for independent review.

Grenell declassified a routine list of officials who signed off on an unmasking request of a U.S. person, enabling the list's immediate leak to a CBS reporter.

- The Trump administration gave Senate Republicans a list of Obama administration officials who during the 2016 presidential transition signed off on unmasking requests that turned out to be about Michael Flynn.
- Senate Republicans released the list of officials and immediately after joined Trump in mischaracterizing virtually every part of the process. They falsely claimed the list shows that the Obama administration, and Vice President Joe Biden in particular, targeted Flynn as part of a nefarious witch hunt.
- That, by the very nature of the unmasking process, could not happen. Unmasking requests by definition only happen when officials don't know the identity of the individual being unmasked, meaning there's no way to actively target an individual using the unmasking process.

At the same time, Barr's DOJ and Grenell's agencies are withholding the transcripts of Flynn's calls with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, which prompted the unmasking in the first place.

- The DOJ blatantly defied a court order to make the transcripts of Flynn's calls with Kislyak public, claiming it never used them to establish Flynn's guilt.
- Yet Flynn pleaded guilty twice—specifically for lying about the contents of the calls, which even Barr's DOJ is acknowledging.

The administration has released notes from the investigation into Flynn.

- Shortly before announcing its intention to withdraw the case against Flynn, the DOJ released documents that Trump and his cronies falsely claimed showed an FBI conspiracy to entrap Flynn. They actually showed routine discussion and debate about how best to proceed with the investigation.
- The administration also declassified an email that Obama's national security adviser, Susan Rice, sent documenting a meeting about the Flynn investigation in January 2017. Contrary to Trump and his cronies' narrative, the email shows that the Obama administration emphasized the need to do the investigation "by the book" and avoid politicization, even as concerns grew about Flynn's conversations with Kislyak.

But the administration is reportedly withholding notes from its investigation into that same investigation.

- When submitting its motion to withdraw, the DOJ reportedly concealed from the court an interview in which former FBI counterintelligence head Bill Priestap, who oversaw the

investigation into Flynn, told the DOJ lawyers that their interpretation of the notes in question was false.

Trump is demanding that Obama testify about the origins of the Russia investigation.

- On Thursday, Trump declared on Twitter, "If I were a Senator or Congressman, the first person I would call to testify about the biggest political crime and scandal in the history of the USA, by FAR, is former President Obama. He knew EVERYTHING."
- While Senate Republicans have not yet done so, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-SC) says his committee "will begin holding multiple, in-depth congressional hearings regarding all things related to Crossfire Hurricane [the code name for the FBI's Russia investigation] starting in early June."

Meanwhile, Trump refused to testify in the Russia investigation.

- When Mueller was investigating Trump's conduct, which actually may have included criminal behavior, Trump repeatedly refused to sit for an interview and ultimately only submitted written answers.
- Mueller later confirmed the written answers contradicted other evidence he gathered during the investigation. In other words, the president lied.

The Trump administration has gone to extreme lengths to ensure that information that could hurt the president never comes out.

- Last week, the White House and the DOJ argued in court that Congress could not subpoena Trump's financial records from either his accounting firm or Deutsche Bank, directly contradicting established law and precedent.
- The administration is also currently arguing that courts cannot enforce subpoenas for witnesses in the Mueller investigation, most notably former White House counsel Don McGahn, to testify before Congress.
- In January and February, the administration blocked more than a dozen material witnesses from testifying in impeachment hearings while arguing that Congress needed to go to court to have their subpoenas enforced, directly contradicting its own arguments in the McGahn case.
- Even when witnesses have testified before Congress, the administration has effectively prevented them from saying anything of substance; for example, when former White House communications director Hope Hicks testified before the U.S. House of Representatives in June 2019, White House lawyers instructed her on 155 separate occasions not to answer questions.

It's clear why the administration is doing this. The two documents it was forced to release against its will—the redacted Mueller report and the partial transcript of Trump's July 25, 2019, call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—were both incriminating. The former outlined clear evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia as well as numerous potentially illegal efforts by Trump to obstruct the investigation. The latter clearly showed that Trump extorted Zelensky in an effort to force Ukraine to announce bogus investigations into his political opponents, leading directly to Trump's impeachment.

Trump is the most corrupt president in American history, and his administration is the most corrupt administration in American history. No amount of deflection, projection, or deception can change that; it only betrays how guilty they really are.